

THE

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SHEKEL



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IDENTIFICATION OF CHALICE



ON FIRST REVOLT SHEKELS



- Featuring:*
- *The Identification of the Chalice on the Silver Coins of the First Jewish Revolt Against Rome by Isadore Goldstein*
 - *Two Eighteenth-Century Jewish Love Tokens by Ira Rezak*
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

18 Two Eighteenth-Century Jewish Love Tokens by Ira Rezak



04 The Identification of the Chalice on the Silver Coins of the First Jewish Revolt Against Rome by Isadore Goldstein

14 Rethinking the Symbols on the Ancient Jewish Shekels by Mel Wacks

18 Two Eighteenth-Century Jewish Love Tokens by Ira Rezak

23 Israel Commemorative Medals by Series by Simcha Kuritzky

27 What are the Motifs on Herod the Great's "Year 3" Coins Part 4 by David Jacobson

34 Judaea Capta: Subjugation and Defeat on Ancient Roman Coins Part I by Tyler Rossi

37 Jewish Coins Recycled During Roman Wars Part I by Stephan Fregger

45 Sagely Advice on the Pandemic by Aaron Oppenheim

37 Jewish Coins Recycled During Roman Wars Part I by Stephan Fregger



COMING NEXT ISSUE:

LODZ/LITZMANNSTADT: WWII
GHETTO MONEY

45 Sagely Advice on the Pandemic by Aaron Oppenheim



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THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE CHALICE ON THE SILVER COINS OF THE FIRST JEWISH REVOLT AGAINST ROME

By Isadore Goldstein



Year One shekel showing early chalice and Year Two shekel showing later chalice
Courtesy of Zuzim Inc.

The identification of the cup, or bowl, on the shekels and half shekels of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome has been considered an enigma for some time. Professor Yaakov Meshorer identifies the image of the cup/bowl as a “chalice”, but does not determine its use (Meshorer, *Treasury of Jewish coins*, 2001). He cites earlier scholars who considered it a drinking vessel and mentions E.W. Klimowski, who described it as God’s “cup

of fury” or Jerusalem’s “cup of trembling”—which appears an unlikely theory considering the positive messages intended on these coins.

Paul Romanoff discounts the possibility that the bowl was a drinking vessel and proposes that it represents the Omer cup (Romanoff, *Jewish Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins*, 1944), a vessel that held barley grain in a Temple ritual that was celebrated

Continued

on the second day of Passover. In a research paper on the coin of the First Revolt with co-author J.P. Fontanille (Goldstein and Fontanille, *A New Study of the Coins of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome, 66-70 C.E.*, ANAJ, 2006), we argued that this identification was unlikely. Among several other reasons, there is no known secondary representation or description of the Omer cup, and it is unlikely that the contemporaneous populace were familiar with a Temple-specific vessel, used only once a year. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Omer cup was awarded any special cultic status that would have been embedded in the national conscience. This cannot be overstated, as to our knowledge, while there is ample ancient Rabbinical literature detailing the Omer harvesting and sacrificial process, there is no portrayal of the Omer cup in either the rabbinical or historical literature to lead us to believe that it could have been the central focus of the most prominent coin of the rebellion. Our position was that the cup may have been symbolic, without a specifically prescribed use. It suggested the “cup of salvation” as the psalmist states “a cup of salvation I shall raise, thus complementing the legend “to the freedom of Zion” in fulfillment of

the aspirations of the Judaeans.

David Hendin, in *his Guide to Biblical Coins*, takes the Omer position in his earlier editions, but then provides the more encompassing description of “ritual chalice” in his 5th Edition (2010).

Continued study of this issue has led me to conclude that the most likely identification for the bowl is not a cup, but a basin. The shekel illustrates the large basin known as the *Kiyor*, or laver, which was located in the Temple courtyard and used by the priests to wash their hands and legs to purify themselves for the daily Temple service. The form evident on the coin is alluded to by a verse in Exodus (30:18), “You shall make a laver of copper and its base of copper for washing.” The medieval commentator Rashi expands that the laver was an urn or basin, and the base, a stand. This basin with its stand is what is depicted on the shekel coin.

Though this interpretation was not considered by most earlier Judaeans numismatists, it is not original. Little more than half a century ago, there was a very enthusiastic amateur numismatist by the name of Wolf Wirgin, who penned numerous articles as well as a book entitled “The History of Coins and Symbols in Ancient

Israel” (Exposition Press, 1958). His methodology may have been flawed; some of his theories are considered extreme, were often disproven, and were certainly not popular with the scholarly community. It is therefore with hesitation that I attach myself to any of his proposals, but I do believe that he struck upon the right description of the cup/bowl depicted on the shekels, as the Temple laver, if not for all the right reasons.

Wirgin reviews several other Roman provincial coins that feature a similar bowl on their reverses. Although he incorrectly dates our coins to the period of John Hyrcanus, bolstering his theory with literary evidence, this

early dating for the shekels has already been disproven. In fact, our knowledge that the shekels were struck about two hundred years later actually brings us much closer to the roughly contemporaneous first century Roman coins he uses as paradigms.

Wirgin correctly observes that although at first glance the vessel on the shekel looks like a chalice, this is an “optical illusion.” He points us to a depiction of a similar looking bowl on a coin of Anazarbus, Cilicia (Fig. 1) where the top of the bowl is at the waist level of a man, and astutely deduces that we cannot perceive the size of a solitary object without a point of reference.



Fig. 1 Bronze Coin of Anazarbus, Cilicia

Another coin presented by Wirgin (Fig. 2) looks very similar to the bowl depicted on the Year One shekels of the First Jewish Revolt.



Fig. 2 Bronze Coin of Pergamum, Mysia. Courtesy of American Numismatic Society

BMC describes the vessel on this coin as a “basin for washing, resting on stand” and notes that similar vessels are found on Greek pottery. Indeed, a quick search for “basin Greek pottery” brings up numerous examples of similar wash basin vessels. This particular coin was struck for the Gymnasiarch A. Furius and depicts the wash basin used by athletes. In other words, this vessel unquestionably was used for the same basic function as the laver in the Temple.

Wirgin also proposed that the numerous pearls found on the bowl of Year Two onward likely represented “stop-cocks” which were essentially spigots that were made for the laver by the high priest Ben-Katin. This would

allow twelve priests to use the laver simultaneously. He does not seem to be convinced that this was the engraver’s intention, declaring “With the new interpretation....it may not seem farfetched to regard the rim of pearls as an illustration of Ben-Katin’s gift.”

Wirgin’s theory was upbraided shortly thereafter by Leo Kadman (Kadman, *The Coins of the Jewish War 66 – 73*, Shoken, 1960).

Kadman lays out four arguments which he believes disprove the possibility of the bowl’s identification as the laver.

Leaning heavily on Wirgin’s suggestion that the pearls represent Ben-Katin’s spigots, he cites a Talmudic description of the laver

that explains that after the laver was filled with water, the priests washed themselves by utilizing the higher taps in the morning and the lower taps in the evening. This proves that the taps could not have been arranged along the upper border of the laver.

His next argument, essentially similar, is that there would have to be higher and lower taps and they could not be arranged in a single line.

Third, is that there was a wheel attached to the laver.

And finally, due to the weight of the laver and the water it contained,

it would have required “a much more solid base than the slender stem shown on the shekel.”

Some time ago, I acquired a small group of Levantine bronze coins. In the group, I found an interesting 1st Century bronze coin (Fig. 3), similar to the coin of Pergamum, but anepigraphic on the side of the bowl. Looking at the reverse of this coin (Fig. 4), I felt like I was staring at a smaller bronze version of the Year One shekel of the First Jewish Revolt. It was certainly hard to imagine that the vessel depicted on the shekel is anything different than that illustrated on the bronze coin.



Fig. 3 1st Century Bronze Coin (possibly of Pergamum)



Fig. 4 Reverse of Bronze Coin

It was clear to me that this depiction is also a wash basin of the Greek gymnasium. I showed the coin to Frank L. Kovacs, a scholar and expert in Ancient Eastern coins, who concurred that this was a basin used by athletes of the gymnasium for washing.

There could be little doubt now that the symbol on the Year One shekel was indeed the laver, a vessel known and recognized as a wash basin throughout the ancient world. In this case, it represented the well-recognized laver in the Temple and not an unknown and uncelebrated vessel such as the Omer receptacle or a generic chalice.

But what of Kadman's arguments? In my view, they do not hold up to scrutiny.

In his first and second arguments,

he refers to the Talmud's statement to demonstrate that there were upper and lower taps. This proves that due to function and arrangement, the taps could not be arranged in a single line on the upper part of the laver.

He begins by telling us that the Talmud is explicating the statement "Ben Katin made twelve water-taps for the laver.... etc." and writes that the Talmud's description of the upper and lower taps applies to this sentence. This is not how the Talmud should be read. If the Talmud was only explaining these first few words about Ben-Katin's laver, then those are the only words that would appear in the heading. The addition of the "etc." in the heading tells us that the entire statement will be explicated. This will include the part that states that originally (before Ben-Katin)

the laver had only two spouts.

The Talmud first relates an outside source that the purpose of the spouts was so that twelve priests could wash themselves simultaneously. The Talmud then quotes another outside source regarding the positions of the upper and lower tap. However, this teaching is only explaining how the earlier laver with two spigots was constructed and is not referring to Ben-Katin. Tellingly, the source does not use the words upper or lower “taps” in the plural, but speaks only in the singular. He is explaining that on the original laver, which had only two spigots, they were aligned vertically rather than horizontally. That would resolve the question of how a priest could obtain water when the level was low. Of course, another solution could be that both spigots were situated horizontally lower down on the laver, which seems to be the consensus of the main Biblical commentators who simply mention a pair of spigots without any special arrangement.

Additionally, this Talmudic description of the spigots cannot be referring to those of Ben-Katin and as being staggered as Kadman contends, because that would lead to an internal contradiction in the text, which clearly states that the purpose of Ben-Katin’s innovation was so that twelve priests could

utilize the laver at once. With the spigots so divided, only six priests could avail themselves of the laver simultaneously. And any assumption that there were therefore twenty four spigots would go against the text itself which categorically states that there were twelve.

In further defense of Wirgin, Kadman’s questions only speak to his suggestion that the pearls on the shekel refer to Ben-Katin’s spigots. It is quite possible that those pearls are only a design element. Wirgin proposed the twelve-spigot theory to explain the presence of pearls on the basin, but that explanation is not at all integral to the identification of the bowl as a wash basin.

In fact, if we are to avail ourselves of the Talmud, the Talmud queries in Tractate Zevachim 21a whether a priest can fulfill his ritual cleansing obligation by immersing his hands and legs into the laver rather than using the spigots to stream on him. From the question itself, we see that that laver had to be a large open bowl.

From my perspective, it is not necessary to come to any conclusion about the pearls one way or another, because there were no pearls at all atop the shekel in its original design. It wasn’t until the fourth iteration of the shekel’s design that the

row of pearls suddenly appeared! Looking at the Year One shekel in all its evolutionary forms from prototype to final form (Fig. 5), there was no row of pearls atop the shekel. It simply appears as a wash basin with two offset pearls

(possibly spigots or handles) on the side. It stands to reason, that these earliest versions of the shekel show the actual Temple vessel the engravers were trying to depict, and subsequent alterations were artistic enhancements.



Fig. 5 Year One shekel design evolution, left to right

It is only in Year Two that the pearls appear on the vessel, that was by then known and recognized by the populace. Thus, their addition can be simply a design enhancement or even possibly an allusion to the taps of Ben-Katin. One can also note that according to the Omer cup and other theories, the pearls must be seen as merely ornamental.

His third argument is difficult to comprehend. Yes, the laver was supplied with a wheel. This was actually a wheel and pulley system designed to lower the laver into an

underground water pit, so it would not become ritually unfit by being exposed overnight.

Do we really expect that if the engravers wanted to depict the Temple laver that they would feel compelled to also illustrate the wheel and pulley apparatus?! Needless to say, this was viewed as a separate, secondary and perhaps unsightly component, and is of no significance to the design of the coin. Beyond that, it was a later innovation, not even part of the original Biblical laver.

Finally, Kadman argued, that a much more solid base would have been required for the laver than the slender stem shown on the shekel. Again, looking at the Year One shekel design this is simply not correct. The basin has a very low center of gravity, close to the base, which is itself as wide as the internal dimensions of the basin. In fact, the shekel basin appears even more stable than its counterparts on the Greek coinage.

Even on the later Year Two and Three “enhanced” shekels with the slender stem, we see that the lower part of the stem now has the addition of a weightier triangular form and the base itself is often wider than the bowl, making it solidly stable (Fig. 6), and still similar to the composition of the ancient Greek and Roman wash basin stands (Fig. 7). This change makes sense for the support of a heavy basin, but not for an Omer cup or chalice that had to be carried around.



Fig. 6 Year Two and Three shekels, left to right, Courtesy of Zuzim Coins



Fig. 7 Fourth Century B.C.E. wash basin and stand

In summation, based on the design of the early shekels, the description of the laver in Exodus, and the contemporary numismatic evidence, we can conclude that the vessel on the obverse of the Jewish War shekels is the *Kiyor* – laver.

Aside from visual recognition, the association of the silver shekel with the *Kiyor* - laver in the mind of the Judaeen populace would have been immediate. In the chapter of Exodus where the children of Israel are commanded to take the silver shekel for the census, the very next instruction is “and thou shall make a copper laver and its base of copper.”

Hezekiah ben Manoah the 13th century commentator, also known as *Chizkuni*, asks why this vessel was not expounded upon in the Bible in the same chapters as the other temple vessels, but was first described here. He answers that the other Temple vessels were objects of integral holiness used in the Temple service, while the laver was used in the preparation for holiness.

We can perceive intentional avoidance on the part of the engravers of depicting those integral holy vessels of the Temple, such as the Menorah, Altar, Showbread table, or even the Omer cup, so they engraved the *Kiyor* – laver. The laver not only shares textual proximity to the shekel, but paralleled the shekel as pre-emptive in function. Both were used to prepare for the holy. The shekel donative was used to purchase the sacrifices, and the laver, to ready the priest for the Temple service.

We cannot really know whether this last idea was contemplated by the authorities, but the fact that the laver was a step down from the Temple vessels they did not want to depict, must have been perceived by them. And the singular proximity that the *Kiyor* – laver had to the commandment requiring the shekels, certainly could not have been lost on either the authorities or the people. ▢

RETHINKING THE SYMBOLS ON THE ANCIENT JEWISH SHEKELS

By Mel Wacks

Excerpted from “The 45th Anniversary Edition of The Handbook of
Biblical Numismatics.”



Fanciful picture of the Ark of the Covenant, containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna and Aaron's budding rod.

Within the Ark of the Covenant, were contained the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's budding rod. And, possibly, two of these objects may have been portrayed on the shekels issued during the First Revolt.

Some have called the vessel on the obverse a chalice. But Paul Romanoff (*Jewish Symbols on*

Ancient Jewish Coins), writes “It is doubtful whether ... the vessel was a drinking cup. The dotted border would make drinking almost impossible ... while the drinking of wine in the Temple was forbidden.” Romanoff, rather, believes it could be the “golden vessel that contained the omer and was used on the second day of Passover when a measure of barley, a tenth of an ephah ... of fine flour, was offered to the

Continued



First Revolt, shekel, Year 3 = 68/69 CE

Temple as the first-fruits of the field” (*Exodus 16:36*).

There are also several possible interpretations of the reverse design — a budding pomegranate plant as described in the *Song*

of Solomon 6:11: “I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, *and* to see whether the vine flourished, *and* the pomegranates budded,” or something else.



Pomegranates grow individually, like apples, and not at the ends of long stalks — as depicted on the shekels.

In 1864, Federic Madden (*History of Jewish Coinage and of Money in the Old and New Testament*) described the reverse motif as “a triple lily,” but by 1881 Madden (*in Coins of the Jews*) had changed

his mind — calling it “Aaron’s rod.” This attribution has been reinforced recently by Robert Deutsch (*The Jewish Revolt against Rome, Interdisciplinary Perspectives — Coinage of the*

First Jewish Revolt against Rome: Iconography, Minting Authority, Metallurgy, Brill, 2011). Deutsch writes that “The only symbol on the coins for which we had no straightforward explanation was the rod with three ... buds. If the assumption that this is a staff is correct, then it may be identified with the Jewish high priest.” This would be based on the verse: “And on the following day Moses came to the Tent of Testimony, and behold, Aaron’s staff for the house of Levi had blossomed! It gave forth blossoms, sprouted buds, and produced ripe almonds” (*Numbers 17:23*).

The two sides of the Shekel could well illustrate what Maimonides described: “When [King Solomon] constructed the [Temple in Jerusalem] ... Together with [the ark], were entombed Aaron’s staff, the vial [of manna], and the anointing oil.” (*Hilchos Beis HaBechirah, Chapter 4*).

This explanation of the shekel motifs would also correspond with the writings of the great rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nachmanides), 1194-1270, who sent the following additions to his commentaries, after visiting Eretz Israel:

“The Lord has blessed me so greatly, for I have been so fortunate as to come to Acco and there to find in the hands of the elders of the land a silver coin with engravings, on one side resembling the branch of an almond tree, on the other some sort of dish ... [The Samaritans] say that the shapes are Aaron’s staff, with its almonds and blossoms, and the other shape, the container of manna.”

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson writes that “the Rambam [includes in] the fourth chapter of Hilchos Beis HaBechirah ... the following statement: When [King Solomon] constructed the [Temple in Jerusalem] ... Together with [the ark], were entombed Aaron’s staff, the vial [of manna], and the anointing oil. All of these [sacred articles] did not return in the Second [Temple].” This is repeated in the New Testament, where *Hebrews 9:3-4* tells how “The tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all ... wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded.” Furthermore, “[Aaron’s rod] put forth buds, produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds” (*Numbers 17:8*).



Young almonds crowned with dried petals — resembling the motif on the shekels.

Photo from “Nature and Landscape in Jewish Heritage” by Noga HaReuveny.

Hendin (*Guide to Biblical Coins*) calls these motifs a “ritual chalice” and “pomegranate buds,” Meshorer (*Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period*) describes them as a “chalice” and “stem with three fruit pomegranates” and Madden (*Coins of the Jews*)

calls them “a cup or chalice” and “Aaron’s rod.”

Pot of manna or chalice, Aaron’s rod of almond buds or three pomegranates, or something else — take your choice. ☞

TWO EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY JEWISH LOVE TOKENS

By Ira Rezak

The term “love token” is commonly applied to coins which have been substantially altered and personalized by engraving. The reason for this is that a great many, though far from all such repurposed engraved coins, were made as gifts from one person to a friendly or intimate other. Whether fully named to the intended recipient, or alternatively by the donor, or quite commonly where the person’s names are substituted by a monogram, such items were clearly intended as affectionate memorabilia. This customary usage originated with graffiti in antiquity, but was common throughout Europe for many centuries and was especially prevalent in the United Kingdom from the 17th century through the 19th century and consequently became popular in the United States as well. A considerable

array of such material has survived and is avidly sought by collectors because such specimens are not only unique in themselves but also convey a decidedly personal sense of the individuals who had them produced and of the feelings that inspired them in times past. The subject matter of so-called love tokens is very broad because the occasions for their production are quite varied ranging from family and friendly gifts, birth and death commemorations, membership tokens, war and travel souvenirs and, of course, the declarations of love between men and women that have led to the generic term “love token.”

In a recent issue of *The Shekel*, a smoothed and engraved British copper half penny coin with the name Moses Robus was described as being a “convict love token.”



Continued

Convict love tokens are a particular sub-category of engraved coins associated with the late 18th and early 19th century practice of English courts to condemn convicted criminals to penal servitude and deportation, mainly to Australia. Such convicts were initially confined aboard ships in English ports until a sufficient group had been gathered to warrant the ship's undertaking the long sea voyage to their distant destination. The periods of servitude were typically very long, and most convicts despaired of ever being able to return to their native land. While still imprisoned aboard the ships in port before sailing many

such prisoners had coins engraved to be left with their loved ones as keepsakes so that they themselves and their relationships might not be forgotten. Such "convict love tokens" are quite affecting because of the fraught circumstances that led to their creation.

A few non-Jewish examples, each engraved on a smoothed English penny coin, will suffice to illustrate the typical character of convict love tokens.

One, dated March 12, 1833, depicts the prisoner R. Musgrave, who has been sentenced to deportation for life, in chains, smoking a pipe, while the reverse



side shows his lover or wife, Rachel Parkes.

Another names Ebenezer Grim, aged 28, who is drawn along with his wife and two daughters, Bette, Maryanne and Harriet, while the reverse side records a characteristic farewell message:

“when this you see remember me and bear me in your mind, let all the world say what they will, don’t prove to me unkind”.

A third shows a bird, probably a symbol of hoped-for liberty, the name of the convict, T.Middleton, a(ge)d 17, and on the reverse side



that of the girl he leaves behind, Rachel Wiseman, a(ge)d 15, whom he implores to “forget me not.”

The engraved coin of Moses Robus is of a distinctly different aspect, lacking any indication, graphic or textual, that he was

condemned. In fact, the trial record quoted in *The Shekel* specifies that he was found not guilty at his trial, thus making it unlikely that this piece ought to be considered a convict love token. Moreover, the heart pierced by two arrows as is entirely typical of a category of



engraved coins of a more common type that seem to be more simply, tokens of love. We may speculate about the meaning of the crossed pistols, the sword and the keys drawn on the reverse of this piece, but it seems more likely that this piece was a soldier's gift to an unnamed sweetheart

than a parting memorial left behind by a criminal condemned to deportation. Whether Moses Robus was Jewish is also subject to considerable doubt. True, at his trial he was associated with a group of undoubted Jews, namely, Abraham Abrahams, James Parker (aka Lazarus Levi)

and Arthur Levy, as well as one Jones, a confessed convert from Judaism, but Robus is a family name of distinctly Scottish origin and biblical first names such as Moses were very common among Protestants of the 18th century.

As it happens, there are actual Jewish-related love tokens of this same period and two, both British and engraved on smoothed English halfpennies, are presented here.

The first, names Lazarus Levi and Elizabeth Wilson, is dated (17)78, and records their love on the coin's obverse both textually

and also by a display of traditional symbols of love, arrows piercing a heart, as well as leafy branches, perhaps representing myrtle, commonly associated with love. The reverse depicts what is probably a punch bowl with its ladle, two glasses, and tobacco clay pipes, all conveying a sense of conviviality and comfort, and a folded and sealed love letter. That their family names are different may mean that this couple were sweethearts rather than already married.

The second specimen names Abraham Mendoza (with the Z



retrograde) on one side, gives his age as 24, the year as 1781, and shows a royal crown with the initials GR (Georgius Rex) presumably as a proclamation of Mendoza's loyalty to his native or perhaps adoptive country. The reverse of the coin shows a conventional heart pierced by two arrows bracketed by the

word "love." A spiraling outer inscription presents a doggerel rhyme beginning "The Rose is Red, the Lilley is White," which then situates two names in parallel as a completion of the verse, "Abraham" and "Mary Ellery – Mendoza is my Delight." The careful arrangement of the text on the token and repetition of the

shared family surname presumably indicates that this couple was already married.

Thus, unlike convict love tokens, but similarly to the Moses Robus engraved coin, both of



the described tokens are typical in their texts and iconography as conventional sentimental expressions of love. As personal statements, however, they also serve as documentation of the religious assimilation of Jews into late 18th century English society. Lazarus Levy is an undoubtedly Jewish name, most likely of Ashkenazi background, and in this period, he is likely an immigrant or the descendant of a family recently arrived from Germany, the Netherlands or even from Eastern Europe. Abraham Mendoza is, of course, a typical Sephardic Jewish name of Spanish or Portuguese origin. On the other hand, both Wilson and Ellery are names of presumably Christian English origin. Thus, these particular tokens express love between persons of very

different nativity and religious background and the apparent intermarriage of Abraham and Mary Ellery Mendoza, especially testifies materially to the process of assimilation by Jews in England during the 1780s.

Coins and medals are widely appreciated as remnants of past times that officially and institutionally record, and also continue to illuminate, aspects of past societies. Uniquely engraved and personalized love tokens, on the other hand, themselves served as direct, indeed intimate, agents and participants within that history. Such tokens consequently afford collectors and students the rare opportunity of experiencing an actual material connection to individual inhabitants of that past. ▣

ISRAEL COMMEMORATIVE COINS BY SERIES

By Simcha Kuritzky, NLG

“Buy the book before the coin” is an oft-quoted piece of advice, cautioning one to learn about numismatics before investing any significant amount of money. Given that there are overpriced coins in the market by sellers eager to exploit the uninformed buyer, this is useful advice. After buying (and reading) the book, one may not want to buy the coin, or at least, not at the price offered. But often numismatists buy the book before the coin because they had never seen (or perhaps never noticed) these coins, or they were uninterested because they didn’t know their history. In those cases, reading the book encourages them to buy the coin. This is the case for Israel coins.

Few Americans can read Hebrew, or will recognize the symbols, motifs, and people portrayed on Israel’s coins. Catalogs have described Israel’s coins and banknotes in detail since at least 1968. Even though Israel had just completed their first decade of commemorative coinage, there was enough variety that Bertram & Weber’s *Catalog of Israel’s 20 Years Coins & Currency* split the commemorative coins out into five

series: anniversary, Hanukkah, Purim, victory, and gold. This same framework was adopted by Sylvia Haffner Magnus in the 1973 catalog produced by AINA, which was reprinted and updated several times through 1988. She only renamed victory to special issues and added a sixth series for the pidyon haben coins.

I think it is time to reissue the catalog and update the series that are used to group Israel’s coins. With over sixty years of commemorative coins to choose from, the novice or would-be Israel coin collector can be overwhelmed. Even if an actual catalog is not reissued, collectors can organize their records and get a better handle on their collection by using a series-based catalog number. My proposal is to use ten “super-series” that encompass the dozen official series that Israel has issued as well as group many of the one-off commemoratives that follow a similar theme. I also propose to eliminate the separate series for gold coins. Before 1975, it made sense to separate out gold coins because Americans generally could not legally import them, and the first three gold coin

Continued

series (four coins) had no silver equivalent. But starting in 1967, all of Israel's gold coins (except the recent bullion series) bear the same design as at least one silver coin, and should be described together with coins of the same design.

The easiest series to describe are the anniversary coins, because I only propose two changes. First, I would fold in the gold coins issued since 1968 (5728), and second, I would include the special mint set trade coins with inscriptions for Israel's 25th and 40th anniversaries in 1973 (5723) and 1988 (5748). The anniversary series is the longest in Israel history, starting with the very first commemorative in 1958 (5718), and issued every year since, with the sole exception of 2006 (5776) due to contract issues with the mint. As to the trade coin mint sets, I would also list them in the section under trade coins and cross-reference them with the anniversary coins. But the catalog number would reflect the anniversary series and not trade coins. I would also include the fiftieth anniversary 50 sheqalim and sixtieth anniversary 20 sheqalim banknotes.

Hanukkah coins are a bit more complicated, although they are the second-longest series, issued from 1958-63 (5719-24) and again from 1972-90 (5733-51), a total of

25 years. Israel started portraying Hanukkiyot (lamps) in 1962 (5723), and the rest of the series all show lamps. When Israel retired the series in 1990, they started a successor series portraying other ritual artwork which lasted three years, 1991-93 (5752-54). However, I would not include this artwork series with the Hanukkah coins, although they have a related theme. Instead, I would include the reuse of the Hanukkah lamps on the half sheqel coins issued in mint sets from 1993-2009 (5754-70), and the special Hanukkah inscribed trade coins which were also issued in those mint sets as well as for circulation from 1983-92 (5744-53).

The third series (chronologically) is dedicated to religious use, and includes both the Purim and pidyon haben coinage and medals. Both Bertram & Weber and Haffner catalogs show Purim as its own series, and Haffner also lists pidyon haben as its own series. I would combine them because they are both issued for observant Jews to use in the fulfillment of mitzvot. The Purim coins were issued in copper-nickel (which some observant Jews would not feel met the requirements) in 1961-62 (5721-22), and then as a silver medal starting in 1984 (5744). Even though the medal is not legal tender, I would include it with the coins since it was minted

to circulate, albeit in a very limited way. Similarly, the pidyon haben coins of 1970-77 (5730-37) would be included in this series together with both the pomegranates in a cup design of 1982 (5742) and the child / Aleppo Codex design of 2005 (5765).

The next series is not official. Over the decades, Israel has issued a number of coins commemorating persons. First were various political leaders, then persons whose portraits were retired from banknotes, and more recently, Nobel prize winners. I would group all of these into one super-series of persons. Starting with the gold-only issue for Herzl (although the obverse is identical with the anniversary coin of 1960/5720, the sovereign-sized coin was issued a couple months later as a separate issue), as well as Weizmann in 1962 (5723). Both silver and gold coins were issued for Ben Gurion in 1974 (5735) and Jabotinsky in 1980 (5741). I would also include these politicians as well as Rothschild, Rambam, Eshkol, and Meir on the trade coins commemorating the retiring of their portraits on banknotes from 1984 to 1996 (5744 to 5756). The Nobel prize winners series of Einstein, Agnon, Begin, and Rabin of 2005 to 2012 (5765 to 5772) would also go here, as well as the Naomi Shemer coin of 2005 (5765). I would also include

the euro-denominated fantasies showing Meir 1996 (5756) and Rabin 1997 (5757), which I only recently learned is an official issue of the Israel government. I would cross-reference with Herzl on the anniversary commemoratives of 1960 (5720) and 1997 (5757), and Henrietta Szold and Eliezer ben Mattityahu on the Hanukka lirot of 1960-61 (5721-22), but leave them in those respective series.

Just as the persons series reclassified the first two gold issues, the contemporary events series would reclassify the first of Magnus' special issue coins which Betram & Weber simply listed as the Victory coins of 1967 (5727). This series would also include all of Israel's sports commemoratives, from the Paralympics coin of 1992 (5752) to the three FIFA coins and four Olympic delegation coins of 2004-16 (5764-76). The other non-sport commemoratives are the Soviet/Arab Jewry Let My People Go coin of 1971 (5721), Jordan peace treaty coin of 1995 (5755), and Millenium coin of 1999 (5759). The anniversary coins that should be cross-referenced are Israel Museum dedication 1964 (5724), Knesset building inauguration 1965 (5725), Jerusalem Unification 1968 (5728), Egypt peace treaty 1979 (5739), Russian/Ethiopian aliya 1991 (5751), and the national bird designation 2009 (5769).

Most of Magnus' special issue coins were from the holy sites series of 1982-90 (5743-51), though the series was not yet complete when her last catalog was issued. I would place these in the sites series, and also include the UNESCO sites coins issued sporadically from 2007-15 (5766-75), as well as the Caesaria commemorative of 1995 (5755). I would cross-reference these with the anniversary coins of Eilat 1967 (5727) and Jerusalem 1968 (5728).

The nature series would include the Biblical wildlife coins of 1991-2000 (5752-61) and the very brief views of Israel coins of 2013-15 (5773-75). This would also be cross-referenced with the national bird designation anniversary coins of 2009 (5769).

Artwork would be its own series, starting with the aforementioned ritual artwork series of 1991-93 (5752-54), and continuing with the Biblical artwork series that has been issued almost annually since 1994 (5755).

The last distinct series are the bullion coins beginning in 2010 (5770). These are all one-ounce gold and portray the lion of Megiddo on the reverse and a Jerusalem building or scene on the obverse. While these could be

considered sites, the coins I placed in that series almost all honor an entire city, and the gold bullion coins honor only one building or aspect of the city.

Last is the catch-all special issues series. Perhaps these could be broken out into new series if Israel issues more coins of a similar theme, but for now, they are all one or two of a kind. The list of coins found here are the Bank Israel decade gold coins of 1964 (5725) and silver anniversary of Bank Israel proof set of 1979/80 (5740), the B'nai B'rith 150th anniversary coins of 1992 (5752), the Warsaw Ghetto uprising 50th anniversary coins of 1993 (5753), the end of World War II and beginning of FAO 50th anniversary coins of 1995 (5755), the artists of Israel series of music (2001 / 5761) and architecture (2004 / 5764), and lastly, the reservists coin of 2008 (5768).

Over her 72-year history of statehood, Israel has issued over 600 types of coins using about 200 different designs. Starting a collection of these can be quite daunting unless we break them down into more manageable cohorts. ☐

WHAT ARE THE MOTIFS ON HEROD THE GREAT'S "YEAR 3" COINS PART 4

By David M. Jacobson

There could be another reason why Herod might have wished to refer to the title of *tetrarch* on his dated coins. According to an old proposal of Narkiss (1934: 33–34), the *tau-rho* monogram points to Trachonitis. Narkiss took as his preferred start of the era of this coinage as 31 BCE, when he believed Herod was reconfirmed as king of Judaea by Augustus (which is more likely to have happened in the spring of 30 BCE). As a possible alternative, Narkiss suggested 28 BCE as the beginning of the era, the year that he supposed Herod was granted possession of Trachonitis. On these two assumptions he arrived at either 28 or 25 BCE for 'year 3' of the coins (Narkis 1934: 9–10). However, it is now widely agreed that Trachonitis, along with Batanaea and Auranitis, was awarded to Herod by Rome sometime later, with several scholars opting for 23 or 23/22 BCE, ruling out much of Narkis's proposal.³⁵

When Herod gained possession of Trachonitis, his royal title would

probably not have extended to that detached territory and his position there might have been merely that of *tetrarch*, in continuity with previous practice.³⁶ This, surely, can be the only rational explanation of the presence of two different titles, *tetrarches* and *basileus* on the same coins of Herod; otherwise they would seem to contradict one another (RPC 1.1: 678). Trachonitis was the first territorial annexation that Herod gained at the expense of another established client kingdom and this would have amply justified his desire to proclaim this achievement publicly on his coins. This acquisition marks the start of a true era of rule of the Judaeian monarch as successor to an indigenous line of tetrarchs of Ituraea, in a portion of the latter's principality. Although Herod's gain of Trachonitis may, indeed, have a direct bearing on the monogram and date-mark of these coins, Narkiss was imprecise, in my view, about the place of minting and the chronology.

Continued



Map showing the Galilee, Trachonitis, etc.

According to Josephus, on the death of Zenodorus, Augustus ‘further assigned to him [Herod] all the territory between Trachonitis and Galilee’, comprising ‘Ulatha and Paneas and the surrounding country’ (*BJ* 1.400; *AJ* 15.359–360). This territorial transfer occurred three years later, in 20 BCE, coinciding with a visit by Augustus to Syria (Schürer 1973: 565–566). So, it is possible that the ‘year 3’ stamped on Herod’s coins refers to this event—with most of the motifs corresponding to favourite Augustan themes.³⁷ Surely it is no accident that the date-mark is always coupled with the *tau-rho* monogram on the coins and they are never shown separately. In the words of Meshorer (*AJC* 2:

10): ‘The date and the monogram function as one unit meaning ‘year three of the title tetrarch’. What is revealing in this regard is that there are examples of the two smaller coins of the dated series devoid of both the date-mark and *tau-rho* monogram (Ariel and Fontanille, *The Coins of Herod*: pls. 43 and 33; type 3, reverse R2; type 4, reverse R3). Close inspection of the coins by Ariel and Fontanille revealed that these details were deliberately erased from the dies before the striking of the aforementioned subtypes. It is possible to deduce that, with the consolidation of Herod’s kingship and joining-up of his territorial possessions, both his title of tetrarch and the corresponding era became redundant.

A 23 BCE date for the era of the ‘year 3’ coins happens to be the same as that proposed by Magness (2001: 169–170), but her rationale is very different from the one suggested here. The main premise for her choice of a ‘year 3’ date of 20 BCE is her interpretation of the *tau-rho* monogram as standing for *Tribunicia Potestas*, a power that was conferred on Augustus when he was voted the title of Augustus in 23 BCE. Since Magness could not cite other examples of coins carrying Greek inscriptions together with a Latin monogram, let alone any precedent of the title *Tribunicia Potestas* being reduced to an abbreviation of two letters in ligature, her proposal is highly implausible (CH: 92).

Contemporary Roman client monarchs with Herod generally employed regnal dating on their coins, where dates are given. This applies to Juba I of Mauretania (25 BCE–23 CE) (Mazard 1955: 73–74) and Archelaus Philopatris of Cappadocia (36 BCE–17 CE) (*RPC* 1.1: 551 and nos. 3601–3619). The era for the year date 60 inscribed on the coins of Pythodoris, widow and successor of Polemo I Eusebes of Pontus, remains an unresolved mystery (c. 8 BCE – c. 22/23 CE) (*RPC* 1.1: 567–568 and nos. 3803–3807).

All native Ituraean rulers of the 1st century BCE, down to

Zenodorus referred to the Seleucid era on their coins (Herman 2006, nos. 1–6, 10a–p, 13, 16–17; *RPC* 1.1: 662 and nos. 4768, 4774–4776). They were interrupted by Cleopatra VII of Egypt, who acquired possession of Ituraea along with territory in Phoenicia in 37/36 BCE.³⁸ She issued coins there in her name, which are double dated to year 21 of her regnal era (in Egypt) and year 6 of a new era, marking her territorial gains in the Levant, both corresponding to 32/31 BCE (*RPC* 1.1: 583, 662 and nos. 4771–4773). In Phoenician Berytus, Cleopatra also struck coins dated to this new era (*RPC* 1.1: 648 and nos. 4529–4530 [year 2 and year 6, respectively]). From this example, we learn that Cleopatra’s confirmation as queen by Julius Caesar did not bring about a new regnal count, but her gift from Mark Antony of new territories in Syria, including Ituraea, did. This occurrence could well have provided a precedent for Herod to follow when Ituraean Trachonitis was ceded to him in the following decade.³⁹

A third alternative for the era of Herod’s ‘year 3’ coins might be the Actian one, i.e. 31 BCE, which is encountered in the coins struck in Antioch for Augustus (*RPC* 1.1: 608 and nos. 4151–4160). This explanation would correspond well to the motifs on the smallest denomination, but not be quite so

pertinent with regard to the other coin types in the series. Also, the significance of ‘year 3’ in this case would be less obvious, altogether making an Actian era for these coins the least likely of the three possibilities presented above.

4. The gap in time between Herod’s assumption of kingship and minting of coins in his name

If the date for the ‘year 3’ coin series is brought forward as far as 20 BCE, how can we account for the 17-year gap in coin production from the issues produced at the end of the reign of Mattathias Antigonus to the first coins of Herod?



Coin from subgroups L7–L17 of Alexander Jannaeus-type coins.
Photo courtesy of David Hendin from *Guide to Biblical Coins*.

Part of the answer may lie with the substantial group of small bronze coins that are commonly found in Herodian contexts and classified by Meshorer as belonging to subgroups L7–L17 of Alexander Jannaeus-type coins, which are relatively crude.⁴⁰ It has long been held that these coins postdate Jannaeus. In his revised monograph on Jewish coins,

Madden described these pieces as “uncertain coins struck between the period after the death of Alexander Jannaeus, in B.C. 78, and the accession of Antigonus in B.C. 40” (Madden 1881: 96; cf. Ariel 2006: 192–193). But their presence in Herodian archaeological contexts, noted by both Ariel (2006: 193) and Shachar (2004: 11), suggests that a significant proportion were

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produced later than 40 BCE.⁴¹ In Strata 4–3 of Area E of the Old City of Jerusalem which, from stratigraphic and pottery evidence, has been assigned to the second half of the 1st century BCE, the proportion of identified bronze pieces belonging to the L7-L17 subgroups of Alexander Jannaeus coins to those issued in the name of Herod is 271 to 45, or 6 to 1 (Ariel 2006: 196–211).⁴² Ariel's explanation for this relative abundance of Jannaeus-type coins that were present in Strata 4–3 of Area E is that they belonged to coin hoards that were subsequently scattered (*idem*: 192). However, while this explanation might suit a few particular sites, it could not possibly account for the vast number of the L7-L17 type coins found throughout the Holy Land. Indeed, they were still circulating as accepted tender in Palestine at least until the 5th century CE (Bijovsky 2000–2002: 202), and there is little reason to doubt that they may have been produced until Herod decided to strike coins in his own name.

Furthermore, Mahieu (2012: 377) suggested that these undated coins of inferior quality preceded the minting of the superior 'year 3' coins and could have filled the time gap between the coins of Mattathias Antigonus and Herod's dated issue. Indeed, Marshak has put forward a

case, based on archaeological evidence, for assigning the pair of denominations issued in Herod's name, but undated, displaying a diadem on one side and a tripod on the other, to 30 BCE.⁴³

Concerning placing Herod's 'year 3' coins to a specific date in his reign it should be stressed that their conventional dating to the start of his reign in 37 BCE in no way mitigates the chronological difficulties presented by Herod's coinage. On the contrary, this would require accounting for a dearth of new issues covering the long span of his kingship from 37 BCE to his death in 4 BCE. The meagre and impoverished undated coins assigned to those three decades would accentuate their incongruity in relation to Herod's illustrious achievements, not least his phenomenal building programme.

5. Conclusions

Detailed consideration has been given to the subject matter represented on these coins. The motifs, in particular the *aplustre*, are consistent with a post-Actian date (*i.e.* after 31 BCE), because most of the symbols displayed on the 'year 3' coins refer to themes that were heavily promoted from that time, as noted above. Indeed, what appear at first sight to be a motley assortment of motifs on the 'year 3' coins are in fact a

reasonably coherent sequence of images that refer to aspects of Augustan political and religious ideology, which were inextricably connected in antiquity, and Herod's commitment to it. When summarising the coin types belonging to the series struck for Octavian from c. 32 to c. 29 BCE (RIC 12, nos. 250 - 263), Sutherland (RIC 12: 31) remarked that they 'emphasize Octavian as the protégé of a strong Venus (foundress of the Julian line), as the leader who promises peace, as the winner of victory (especially naval), as the devotee of Apollo'. Apart from the first attribute, the others could very well describe the substance of the motifs that appear on Herod's dated coins. It may seem unusual to find sentiments and aspirations of Augustus on the coins of a client king, but Herod had a reputation as a master of obsequiousness towards Augustus. Josephus (*AJ* 16.157) remarks that 'the greatest of his passions [was] what was done by him in honour of Caesar and [Marcus] Agrippa and his other friends'.

The two seemingly unrelated designs on his largest coin come together as a pairing of Herod (obverse) with Augustus (reverse), in an expression of reverence to both, represented by symbols so as to avoid upsetting the religious sensibilities of Herod's Jewish subjects. Such a

coupling, but expressed as actual portraits of the Emperor and client ruler, is to be found in the near-contemporaneous coinage of the neighbouring Ituraean principality, where human representation was deemed perfectly acceptable.

We have no reason to believe that the vast majority of Herod's Jewish subjects were aware of the meanings attached to the polytheistic symbols on his coins or were bothered about them. It was surely enough that they were satisfied the coins had no images of humans or animals. Of course, this was not the case for the educated Greek and Roman members of Herod's court (Kokkinos 2007: 289–301), including those involved in the selection of motifs on his coins. Marshak, following Meshorer, was struck by the strong Augustan imagery on this dated series, and believed that the coins and their messages were directed to a non-Jewish audience, specifically the military colonists settled by Herod at Samaria-Sebaste.⁴⁴

Accepting a post-Actian date for the motifs on the 'year 3' coins, this would rule out the regnal era of 40 BCE. More likely eras are either 30 BCE, coinciding with Herod's re-confirmation as king of Judaea after Actium, or 23/22 BCE, commemorating Herod's acquisition of the Ituraean

territory of Trachonitis, assuming it occurred then. There are two possibilities. Either the minting of these dated coins celebrated the grant of the title Augustus to Octavian and the founding of Sebaste at Samaria in 27 BCE or celebrated Augustus's visit to Syria and the award of more territory to Herod in 20 BCE. Both occasions furnished a considerable boost to Herod's prestige. Either would have provided the Judaean monarch an ample incentive to strike his finest series of bronze coins, with the largest range of denominations and bearing an important date. Julius Caesar's gift of territory in Syria to Cleopatra VII, including Ituraea in 37/36

BCE (rather than her confirmation as queen of Egypt), was sufficient cause for her to establish a new era. Similarly, such an event might suggest the era on Herod's coins was connected with his award of Trachonitis and the neighbouring areas in the Hauran from Augustus.

The 'year 3' coins are certainly the best designed and executed of Herod's issues and it is reasonable to place their production during the zenith of Herod's reign, when his building programme was in full swing and not in the midst of the turmoil and uncertainty that accompanied his arrival in Judaea in 37 BCE, a point made *a fortiori* by Marshak (2006: 222–223). ▢

Footnotes

35 Jos., BJ 1.398–400; AJ 15.343–48 (see Schürer 1973: 291, 319, 565; Myres 2010: 166); late 23 or 22 BCE, according to Shatzman 1991: 170. Mahieu (2012: 133–138) considers that the award of Trachonitis to Herod took place earlier, at the end of 27 BCE, while Wright (2013: 68) believes that this transfer of territory occurred in 24 BCE.

36 For numismatic evidence of the title *tetrarches* borne by Ituraean rulers, see Herman 2006: 68–72 (catalogue); *RPC* 1.1: 662–663.

37 Magness (2001: 169) makes the connection between the minting of these 'year 3' coins and Augustus' visit to Syria in 20 BCE, but does not also tie it to the award of the territory between Galilee and Trachonitis.

38 For the date of this donation of territory by Antony and its attestation in documentary sources, see Schürer 1973: 288–289 n. 5.

39 Herod's great-grandson, Agrippa II employed at least two official eras, attested on his coins and on lapidary inscriptions (Kokkinos 1998: 322, 398; idem 2003: 172–175). According to Kokkinos, the start of one of these eras marked the award to him by Claudius of portions of Galilee and the Peraea in 55/56 CE.

40 See the description of these crude coins in Shachar 2004: 7. Hill (1914: xciv) refers to them as 'wretched' imitations of Jannaeus issues.

41 Hendin believes that these crude coins were issued between the death of Jannaeus in 76 BCE and the rule of Mattathias Antigonus (40–37

BCE) (Hendin 2009: 113), while Shachar (2004: 28) only ventures as far as Madden by stating that they were struck after Jannaeus' death in 76 BCE. See also Ariel 2000–2002: 109, n. 62.

42 All the other subgroups of Jannaeus coins from Strata 4–3, by comparison, account for a mere 18 specimens.

43 Marshak 2015: 165–170, referring to *TJC*, nos. 48–54; *RPC* 1.1: nos. 4905 and 4906. All the other coins issued in the name of Herod and in a similar style, featuring either the tripod or the diadem on one side (*TJC*, nos. 55–58; *RPC* 1.1: no. 4907) were probably issued at the same time.

44 Marshak 2015: 163–165; cf. *TJC*: 63–65. Marshak is surely mistaken in regarding the 'year 3' coins as being struck for a *congiarium* (a donative distributed to a population). Invariably, such donatives were of precious metal, silver (denarii) or gold (aurei), possessing significant pecuniary value; see Harl 1996: 220–221; Phang 2008: 195–196. By contrast, the rather nominal bronze coins of Herod were hardly appropriate for a donative. Struck in four denominations, these coins were clearly minted for the purpose of very modest domestic transactions.

This four-part article in *The Shekel* represents a republication of this author's article entitled 'Herod The Great, Augustus Caesar and Herod's "Year 3" Coins' that was originally published in *Strata* 33 (2015), pp. 89–118

JUDAEA CAPTA: SUBJUGATION AND DEFEAT ON ANCIENT ROMAN COINS PART I

By Tyler Rossi

Courtesy of www.coinweek.com

The year: 70 CE.

The location: Jerusalem.

The future emperor Titus' legions unleashed their pent-up rage on the Jewish people as fires raged and the Second Temple crumbled. Projected by the spear tips of some 60,000 soldiers, you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who believed that Roman Imperium could ever end in Judaea.

A fiercely independent people, the Jews of Judaea continually chafed under Roman control. Following the takeover of Judaea in 6 CE, Jewish dissidents launched a campaign of "terrorist acts" aimed at Roman officials (Sheldon, 1). No imperial state can stand outright challenges to their authority without retaliation, so the Roman officials resorted to "sharply repressive measures" in their dealings with the local inhabitants (Sheldon, 6).

Thus, due to the buildup of "mass discontent and dissatisfaction"

(Sheldon, 2), the Great Revolt flared to life between the Romans and the Jews in 63 CE when the Roman governor Gessius Florus looted the Second Temple. Despite resorting to brutal guerilla tactics as the war dragged on, the Jewish fighters were thoroughly overwhelmed. After the capture of Jerusalem, the war slowly wound down until the last rebels committed suicide within the fortress at Masada.

Concurrently, in 69 CE, Galba, the governor of Hispania (*Spain*), rebelled against the Roman emperor Nero, launching a short yet bloody civil war. In quick succession, the emperor committed suicide and Galba began his march to Rome. Otho, the governor of neighboring Lusitania (*Portugal*), then revolted, causing Galba's assassination after only seven months on the throne. Vitellius, a genial and well-liked general, soon left his headquarters in Germania (*Germany*). Marching south, he claimed the throne from Otho and

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ruled for only a tumultuous eight months. He later surrendered to Vespasian.

Since Vespasian came to power during a civil war, he needed to quickly solidify his right to rule and in a manner which would brook no dissent. In need of cash and wanting to send a signal of strength, Vespasian turned to his most recent military victory for legitimacy.

First, he levied the punitive *Fiscus Judaicus* tax against all five million of his Jewish subjects (Livius). This tax increased and redirected the historic two denarii temple tax called the “Ioudaiōn telesma or didrachmon” that all Jewish adult males paid to the

Jewish authorities in Jerusalem (Keddie, 58). Under the new law, all Jewish citizens, including women and children, paid the tax that was conveyed instead to the Temple of Jupiter Maximus in Rome forcing the monotheistic Jews to support a pagan institution (Keddie, 58).

With this massive influx of cash, estimated at 40 million sesterces, Vespasian began striking vast numbers of *Judaea Capta* coins (Livius). This series was struck “in all metals—not only gold and silver” and was “on the poor man’s brass, the money of the people, even to the little quadrans with its emblematic palm-tree” (Keddie, 42).



Roman Empire, Vespasian. AU Aureus (7.05 g), AD 69-79. ‘Judaea Capta’ type. Lugdunum mint, AD 69/70 OBV: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG, head of Vespasian right REV: IVDAEA below, female captive seated right, head resting on hand in attitude of mourning; behind, trophy. REF: Hendin 1464; RIC 1; BMC 31-4; Calicó 643.

By the end of the Flavian dynasty, the Judaea Capta series had such high mintage numbers and became so widespread that it symbolized the era's coinage.

More than 17 distinct types minted under Vespasian and Titus exist today (Rocca). While the imagery of the Judaea Capta series varies, the reverses commonly depict four main elements, the most recognizable of which is the Judaeian captive. This figure, "usually a female, is depicted seated, with her right hand in her lap, her left elbow on her left knee and her head resting on that hand in a general attitude of dejection" (Keddie, 38), as can be seen on the gold aureus above.

While most numismatists assume that this female Jewish figure

is an allegory of the province Judaea, it is possible to infer that she represents the defeated Jewish people as a whole. If true, this raises an interesting prospect. If Vespasian used the Judaea Capta imagery as a representation of the Jewish people, he further stigmatized Roman Jews. Furthermore, because the coins were so widespread, it is not inconceivable that Jews would have paid the Fiscus Judaicus with the Judaea Capta denarii. It is hard to imagine a more degrading non-violent political act than forcing a conquered people to pay what amounted to a perpetual war indemnity, with the very coins that served to denigrate them as a defeated and inferior people. ▢

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JEWISH COINS RECYCLED DURING ROMAN WARS PART I

By Stephan Fregger

Recycled Coins of the First Revolt (66 – 70 CE)

Modern environmentalists advise us that the recycling of discarded consumer products is essential to conserve natural resources. Today's eco-friendly citizens recycle steel cans, which are resurrected as automobile fenders; plastic milk cartons and beverage bottles come back as deck planks and carpeting; and aluminum soft drink and beer cans are melted down and return as new soft drink and beer cans.

It appears that even the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem took part in the recycling of silver coins.

The Back Story

In accordance with the biblical pronouncement of the Lord, Jewish males of twenty years and above were required to pay an annual Temple offering of a half-shekel (in silver).¹ In pre-coinage biblical times, silver transactions were made with silver castings or bullion. Coinage was not invented until mid-7th century BCE. At that time Judaea was under Assyrian domination could not produce silver coins of their own. Nor were they allowed to produce silver coins during the

subsequent periods of domination by the Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Ptolemies, Syrians and Romans. For 500 years, Jews had to use silver coins of other kingdoms and cities to conduct commerce and make Temple payments.

Tyrean Shekels for Annual Temple Offering

The city of Tyre (located 12 miles north of modern Israel, in southern Lebanon) was also under Roman domination; however, their pre-existing autonomous mint was allowed to continue operating. In 126 BCE, Tyre began coining silver shekels and half-shekels of the highest quality silver. Ya'akov Meshorer reported their silver content as 90-92% pure silver.² The Tyrean coins depicted the head of the pagan god Melqart on the obverse, and an eagle on the reverse--both of which would have been impermissible on Judaeian coins due to the prohibition against the depiction of people and animals (from the Golden Calf experience). Nevertheless, for economic reasons, the Temple specified that the annual silver offering must be made with the high-silver-content Tyrean coins.

Continued



Shekel of Tyre

This monetary arrangement continued unabated for over 100 years, until 18 BCE, when Rome planned to cease the production of silver coins at Tyre. They planned to consolidate Tyre's silver minting operations and merge them into the larger mint at Antioch, where the coins were officially debased to 80% silver content.

Tyrean Shekels Produced in Jerusalem

The Temple realized that if forced to depend on such debased coins, they would be faced with a potential loss of silver revenue. Amazingly, it appears that King Herod may have received special dispensation from Rome to allow the Temple to produce Tyre Shekels *in Jerusalem*.³ In 18 BCE a new style of "Tyre Shekels" appeared, which looked significantly different than the earlier Tyre issue. Although the coin design remained the same, the fabric, flan size,

renderings and overall workmanship of the new coins were noticeably cruder. However, the weight and high silver content remained as before. The potential silver crisis for the Temple was averted. The new coins, with the enigmatic letters Kappa Rho (KP) displayed in the right field, were popularly called "Jerusalemite" shekels and half-shekels. They were produced for 84 years, until they abruptly ceased in 66 CE., co-incident with the start of the First Revolt.

Shekel of Israel Born

The First Revolt against Rome (otherwise known as the Jewish War) began in 66 CE; no Jerusalemite shekels are found dated after 66 CE. Clearly, the first thing the Temple and rebels did was to scrap (literally) the Jerusalemite shekels, and their offensive non-Jewish Tyrean symbols and foreign Greek inscriptions. In their place, there

Continued



“Jerusalemite” Shekel

appeared the first Jewish coins with Jewish symbols and the proud Hebrew inscriptions proclaiming the Jewish nation: **“Shekel of Israel”** and **“1”** on the obverse, and **“Jerusalem is holy”** on the reverse.



Shekel of Israel – Year 1

Recycled Silver Shekels

Judaea, having no silver ore deposits, would have been dependent on outside sources to mint the new Israel shekel coins. The on-going war against Rome precluded silver importation. However, the Temple treasury then had great amounts of

silver--in the form of Tyrean and Jerusalemite shekels.

Robert Deutsch, in his metallurgical analysis of First Revolt shekels and Tyrean shekels, found the following.⁴

Continued

	First Revolt Shekel	First Revolt Half-Shekel	Tyrean Shekel
Silver Percentage	98.17%	97.98%	96.19%

The differences between Deutsch's silver content analysis (98-96% silver) and Meshorer's earlier finding (90-92% silver) may be due to differing testing procedures. Deutsch's results were made by modern electron microscope analyses performed at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, in Haifa. That test is a non-destructive process which analyzes only the coin surface. Its main drawback is that the coin surface may previously have suffered change from corrosion or leaching. The 40-year-old Meshorer finding was likely determined by the then-standard protocol of physically removing a small bit of the coin for the test.

Deutsch's reported silver content differences between Tyrean and First Revolt shekels (1.98%) and half-shekels (1.79%) may be due to statistical sampling. His First Revolt sample size was 32 coins (23 shekels and 9 half-shekels). His Tyrean shekel samples were really only Jerusalemite, and the sample size (6) was quite small, only covering 5 years (34 BC – 50 CE) out of the 84 years of Jerusalemite production.

With allowances for the testing and analysis differences, I believe it is reasonable to conclude that shekels

from the Temple treasury were the source of the large amount of silver needed to produce the Temple's First Revolt issues.

The shekels were melted down and recycled to make the new national coins.

Adequacy of Silver Supply

The treasury's supply of shekels was adequate for the production of First Revolt shekels and half-shekels to meet the Temple's needs – for at least the first three years of the war. The seminal Menorah Coin Project (MCP) internet database testifies to the sharp decline in quantities of First Revolt shekels and half-shekels after Year 3.⁵

The MCP, founded by JP Fontanille and now maintained by the Israel Numismatic Society, is based on an extensive search of Judaeen coins in world-wide collections and dealer's stocks, plus a 60-year search of auction catalogs, museum catalogs and research documents. The 1,088 photographed specimens of shekels and half-shekels in the MCP database provide the following breakdown of totals by year.

Continued

Year	1	2	3	4	5
Specimens	266	471	287	48	16

Year 1 was the mint start-up year, which probably accounts for the small number of coins relative to Year 2. The precipitous drop-off from Year 3 to Year 4 was undoubtedly caused by the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the chaos of war, but the possibility of diminished Temple silver supplies has not been ruled out. Year 5 (70 CE) production ended with the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, although there is some conjecture that the Year 5 shekels may have been struck at Masada.

Bronze Siege Coins

Bronze First Revolt coinage began with the issue of a pruta (pl. *prutot*) in Year 2 and continued in Year 3. These dime-size coins were produced in very large quantities – probably thousands – and were used for small change in the market place. However, they did not solve the need for mid-value coins in denominations between the prutot and the higher denomination

silver coins. This need was further exacerbated by the severe reduction in silver coinage in Year 4.

The problem was so acute, that three sizes of fractional shekel coins were minted *in bronze* to supplement the silver coins. Each of the coins carried the inscription “Ligulat Zion” (Redemption of Zion). The largest (26mm) also was inscribed “Year four, half”; the mid-sized one (22mm) inscribed “Year four, quarter”. The smallest one (20mm) was inscribed just “Year four”, though its weight leaves no doubt that it was intended as an eighth shekel. Israeli numismatist Leo Kadman, in his *The Coins of the Jewish War of 66-73*⁶, referred these bronze fractional coins as “emergency money”, and David Hendin further described them as the world’s first series of “siege coins” ever minted⁷. The MCP records 33 Year 4 bronze half-shekel specimens: 86 bronze quarters and 329 bronze eighths.



First Revolt Year 4 Bronze Fractional Shekels: Half, Quarter and Eighth

Continued

Recycled Bronze Fractional Ptolemaic coins. Shekels

For many decades it was believed that all First Revolt coins were struck on new blank flans, as contrasted with the Second Revolt (Bar Kokhba Revolt) coins, all of which were overstruck on existing Roman and Greek coins. That understanding has been called into question. Some of the Year 4 bronze quarter-shekels and at least one eighth-shekel appear to have been struck on recycled

Of the 86 quarter-shekel specimens pictured in the MCP, 16 (18.6%) show evidence of a small concave “dimple” in the center of the obverse and/or the reverse sides, strangely similar to the dimples common to Ptolemaic bronze coins.⁸ The dimples are particularly clear on the reverse sides of the quarter-shekels where they are very apparent in the middle of the high relief ethrog image.



Quarter-Shekel – Dimple Detail

The MCP pictures 329 eighth-shekel specimens, of which 26 (8%) show *possible*, though less distinct, indications of a central dimple in the obverse side chalice.

Several alternative explanations for the dimples have been offered:

A. They are due to corrosion.

I reject this explanation, since there is no obvious surface corrosion on most of the images, and there is no corrosion on the coin I personally own;

- B. They were caused by a compass-like tool used by the die engraver, when scribing a circle to set a border of dots. Rejected. A center point set in a die would produce a convex projection on a coin, not a concave dimple;**
- C. They are from an irregularity in the die that stamped the dimple into the coins. Rejected. If that were true, then all specimens from the same die would show dimples. However, in many of**

Continued

the reverse strikes from the same die, some specimens show a dimpled ethrog, while others show the ethrog with an un-dimpled natural textured surface;

- D. The mint obtained some dimpled flans for production efficiency tests.** This would seem plausible if dimple vs. non-dimple flan tests were conducted with a few dies. However, the dimpled flans appear with multiple dies throughout the minting run, with no obvious pattern of use:

- E. The coins were re-struck on existing appropriate size coins as a production expediency. Some dimpled Ptolemaic coins were used.** *This is the most plausible alternative.*

Comporting with alternative “E.”, numismatist Paul Ryneerson, the Research Cataloger of the legendary 1991 Abraham Bromberg Collection sale provided his explanation.⁹ Referring to Lot 75 – Medium Bronze (“One Quarter”), Ryneerson wrote:

“Note the small concavity



Quarter-Shekel - Lot 75 Abraham Bromberg Collection Part I – Superior Galleries 1991

on both obverse and reverse; this is normally observed on Ptolemaic bronzes of Egypt, which also exhibit similar characteristics as on the present coin. This possibly indicates that this coin was restruck by the Jews upon a previously minted coin of Ptolemaic times.”

Ptolemaic bronzes, many of which

were struck at the Tyre mint, remained in circulation in Judaea and throughout the Mideast for hundreds of years. They were minted in a variety of sizes and weights, including the averages for quarter-shekels.

The images on the left below display a common bronze coin of Ptolemy III (246-222 BCE) from the Tyre mint. Note the dimple in the ear of

Zeus on the obverse side, and in the body of the eagle on the reverse.

Israeli numismatist Yuri Suhanov brought to my attention a uniquely clear example of a dimpled eighth-shekel (shown below on the right), which sold in a recent Goldberg auction.¹⁰

This unmistakable eighth-shekel finding adds further justification for my conclusion that in many cases, the mint recycled existing Ptolemaic bronze coins for new First Revolt Year 4 quarter-shekels, and at least one eighth-shekel. ☞



Ptolemy III Bronze, Tyre Mint



Eighth-Shekel - Goldberg, June 2018

NOTE: Except where otherwise referenced, all pictured coins are from the author's collection

Foot Notes

¹ Exodus 30.13

² Meshorer, Y, *Ancient Jewish Coinage 2*. New York: Amphora 1982, 8

³ Ibid, 7-9

⁴ Deutsch, R, *Jewish Coinage During the First Revolt Against Rome 66-73 CE*. Israel: Deutsch 2017, 47-50

⁵ Fontanille, JP, *Menorah Coin Project*. Israel Numismatic Society, <https://www.menorahcoinproject.com/FJR-02-017>

⁶ Kadman, L, *The Coins of the Jewish War of 66-73*. Corpus Nummorum Palestinensium III. (Jerusalem, 1960).

⁷ Hendin, D, *Guide to Biblical Coins Fifth Edition*, New York, 2010, 346

⁸ Fontanille, JP, *Menorah Coin Project*. FJR 14

⁹ Superior Galleries, *The Abraham Bromberg Collection of Jewish Coins - Part I*. Beverly Hills, California: 1991, 36, 231, 232

¹⁰ Goldberg, *Pre-Long Beach Auction*, Los Angeles, California: June 2018, Lot 3111

About the author - Steve Fregger is a retired professional engineer and part of the Gator Nation. He has been a collector of ancient Jewish coins for over 50 years. He was the recipient of the Ben & Sylvia Odesser Memorial Award (2009) For Outstanding Contribution in Judaic Numismatics.

SAGELY ADVICE ON THE PANDEMIC

By Aaron Oppenheim



Obverse: In Hebrew: "Picture of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, Av Beis Din Posna on the memory of his passing 13 Tishrei 5598"

Reverse: "The blessed memory of Rabbi Akiba Eigers on the 100th anniversary of his death Donation of Jewish community Berlin 9/18/1937"

Rabbi Akiva Eiger is considered one of the most erudite and prolific figures in Talmudic law of the 19th century. His profound commentaries and thoroughly balanced responsa are vigorously studied to this day in the traditional study halls of Torah. His Rabbinic position in Posen, Germany earned him a reputation as a leading authority which extended beyond the judicial treatment of traditional Jewish texts. One important example he set two hundred years ago is perhaps a primer for the world today in facing the COVID-19 global epidemic.

In 1831, Rabbi Akiva Eiger issued a ruling to the Jews of his community in dealing with a cholera pandemic that swept across Europe. He directed them to minimize social groups to no more than 15 people, especially at synagogue prayer services, which was a frequent time for gathering. He advocated law enforcement to ensure adherence to his clearly outlined protocols. Jewish communities in his area were advised to be scrupulous about hygiene, specifically recommending regular washing of hands. Above all, he demanded that all behavior

Continued

should be in accordance with the guidance of medical experts, whose advice, he said, must be followed to the letter. Does this sound familiar given the last year of COVID-19 guidelines coming from WHO, CDC, and medical professionals?

Rabbi Eiger's clearly communicated instructions resulted in a dramatic reduction in death rates compared with the general population. He was even recognized by the Prussian leader Frederick William III for his great contribution to the welfare of the community. An official letter was delivered on the Sabbath during services at the synagogue. Since according to Jewish law, the letter could not be opened by the Rabbi or any congregants, it was opened by the representative and read aloud.

The Berlin community commemorated Rabbi Eiger on the centennial of his passing in 1837 with a large medal issued in 1937 gracing his profile. The presentation medal is particularly unusual in that it portrays the image of a prominent

Rabbi. Since ancient times, engravers of Jewish coins and medals have deliberately avoided using an actual profile in accordance with the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image". Not many medals exist of Jewish portraits, especially Rabbis. My guess is Rabbi Eiger would not have approved of the creation of such a medal!

The medal is likely the last Jewish medal produced before the pogrom by the Nazis in November of 1938 known as Kristallnacht, "Night of Broken Glass," when 1200 Synagogues were burned, and storefronts of Jewish merchants were destroyed. This was the precursor to the horrors of the Holocaust in World War II that began with Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. After all the loss and destruction of pre-war European Jewry, the teachings and advice of Rabbi Akiva Eiger continue to protect and give life to the ideals of Torah Judaism. ♪



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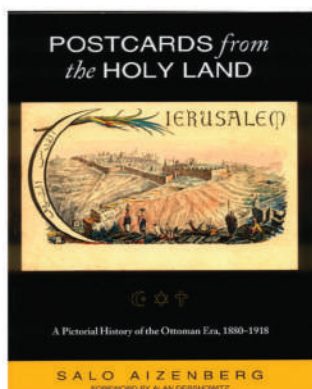
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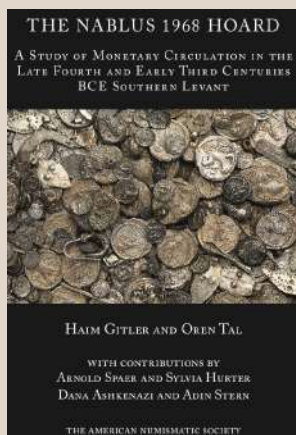
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The Nablus 1968 Hoard: A Study of Monetary Circulation in the Late Fourth and Early Third Centuries BCE Southern Levant

by Dr. Haim Gitler of Israel Museum and
Prof. Oren Tal of Tel Aviv University

with contributions by Arnold Spaer, Sylvia Hurter,
Dana Ashkenazi, and Adin Stern

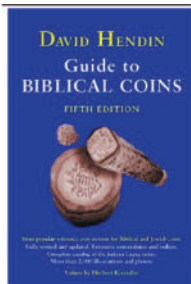
The Nablus 1968 Hoard is the largest late Persian/early Hellenistic period coin and jewelry hoard recorded from the southern Levant and the largest known hoarded assemblage of Samaritan coins. This study provides a detailed catalogue of all the coins and pieces of jewelry the authors managed to record.

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